

CULTURE

GLASS HALF

THE **EMPLOYEE** EXPERIENCE PROBLEM AND HOW TO **FIX** IT



Culture Clash: The Employee Experience Problem and How to Fix It | Research Report

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

“WE DON'T SEE THINGS AS THEY ARE, WE SEE THEM AS WE ARE.” —ANAÏS NIN

In earlier research produced by the Hinge Research Institute, *Navigating the Mid-Career Talent Crisis: A Report for the Professional Services*, we reported that roughly one in five employees either quit or switched their job in the past year. The majority of those professionals were in the mid-career segment. We have since dived deeper into this research and learned that there seems to be a culture clash between mid-career employees and senior management.

Not seeing eye to eye is driving a lot of the resignation motivation

From our earlier research we shared that the two top reasons why mid-career employees are leaving their jobs were "I was frustrated with leadership/management at my previous job" (58.3%) and "I wanted a better company culture." (53.3%)

The clash really starts to reveal itself when you look at responses from both groups on different questions. For example, when asked to rate current company culture, 45% of senior management were satisfied where only 17% of mid-career staff were satisfied.

When asked how to improve corporate culture, 53% of senior management recommended "reinforcing a company core value" while only 15% of mid-career professionals agreed with that recommendation.

Fix the clash and fix the employee experience problem

This new research highlights several areas where mid-career employees and senior management do not see things the same way. The organizations that can accept that this culture clash exists and are willing to work with both employee groups to bring awareness and solutions to the table will be the organizations that see a positive impact on talent retention and acquisition.

The reasons for this clash center on communication, empowerment, respect and culture. The disparity in attitudes is typically not driven by such factors as salary or paid time off. Because this culture clash is primarily between mid-career professionals and senior management, we have not included findings or responses from entry- or junior-level positions in this study.

This study focuses on the culture clash that many organizations may not have recognized, its impact on talent retention and acquisition, and the ways organizations can address this clash to resolve their employee experience problem.



ABOUT THE SAMPLE

ABOUT THE STUDY

ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

284 professionals currently working in a professional services industry participated in this study.

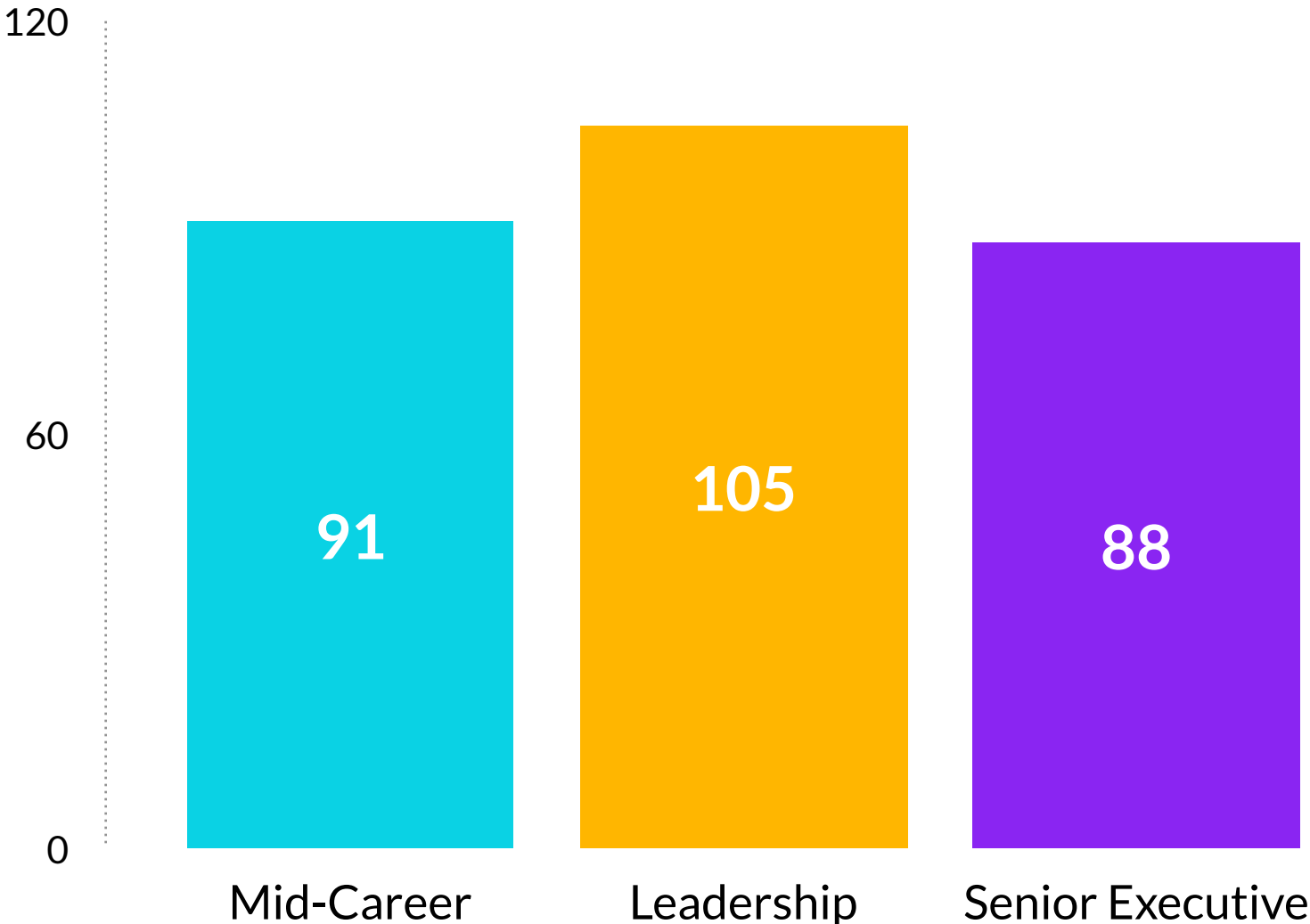
These professionals ranged in career level from mid-career up to senior executive.

Nearly 1 in 5 study participants had either quit or switched their job in the past year.

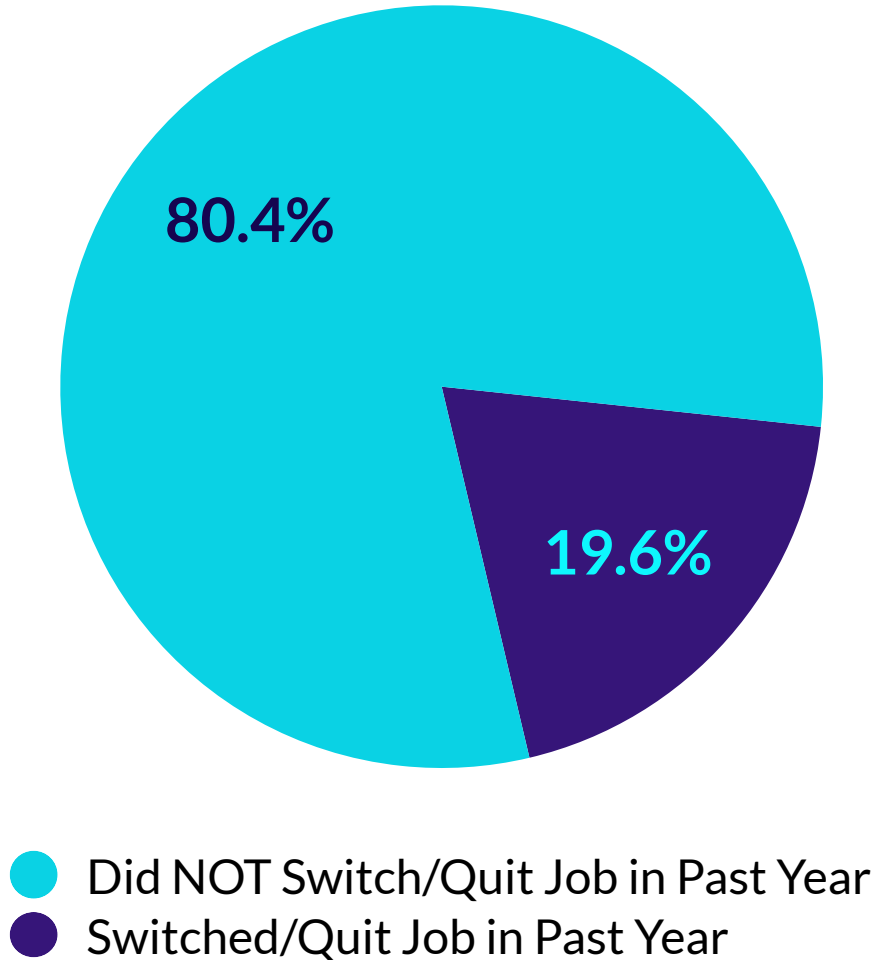
METHODOLOGY

Research participants completed an online survey that included both quantitative and qualitative questions. Participants had to be employed in a professional services industry (see appendix for list of industries).

Career Levels of Study Participants



Have You Switched/Quit Your Job in the Past Year?



Defining Career Levels

Mid-Career: Manager, Sr. Manager, Project Lead/Manager)

Leadership: Director, Sr. Director, Partner, VP

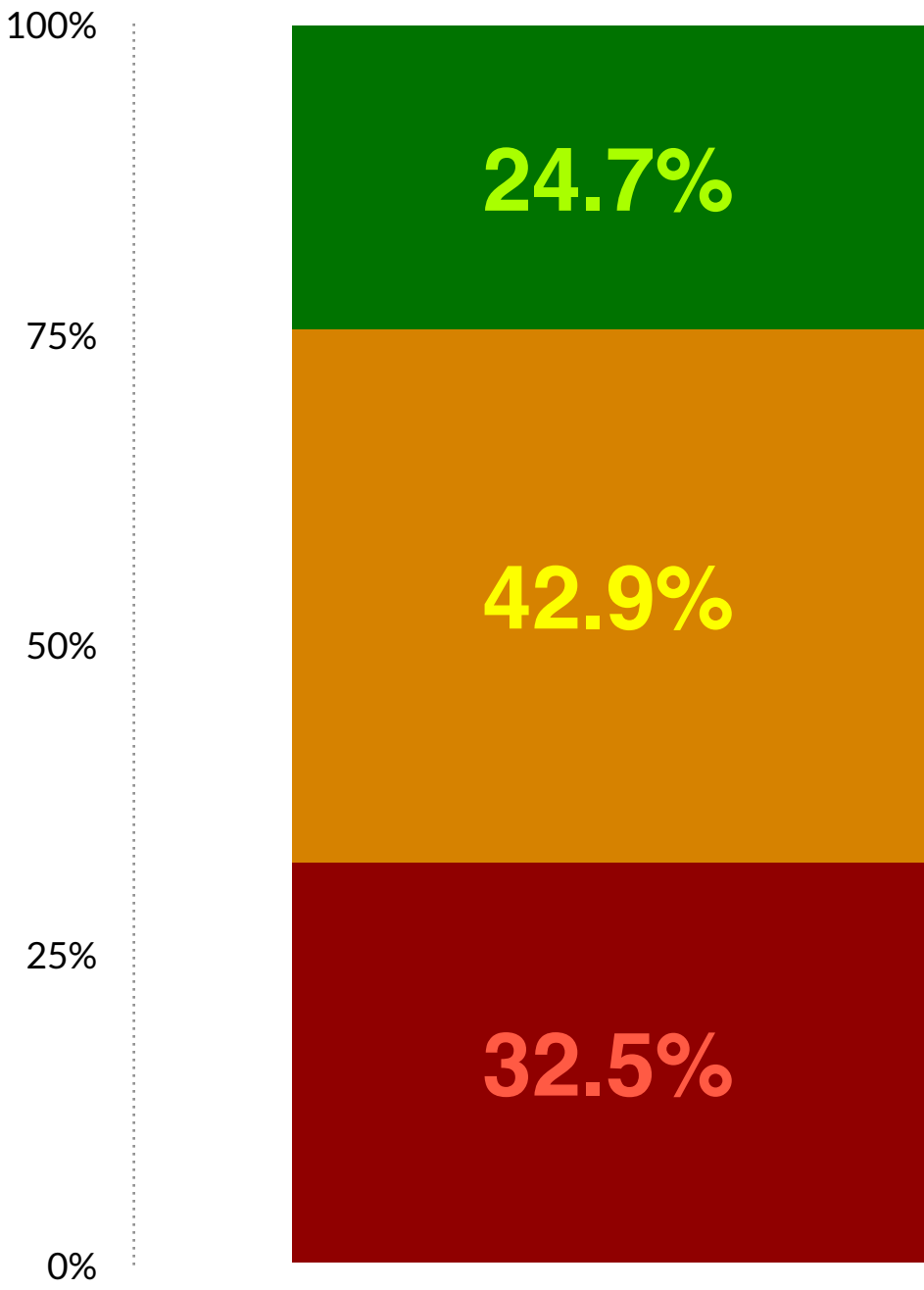
Senior Executive: C-level, President, Managing Partner, Founder, Principal



THE CULTURE CLASH DILEMMA

ONLY 1 IN 4 EMPLOYEES ARE SATISFIED (9-10) WITH THEIR CURRENT EMPLOYER'S CULTURE

Ratings of Current Company Culture on a 0-10 Scale

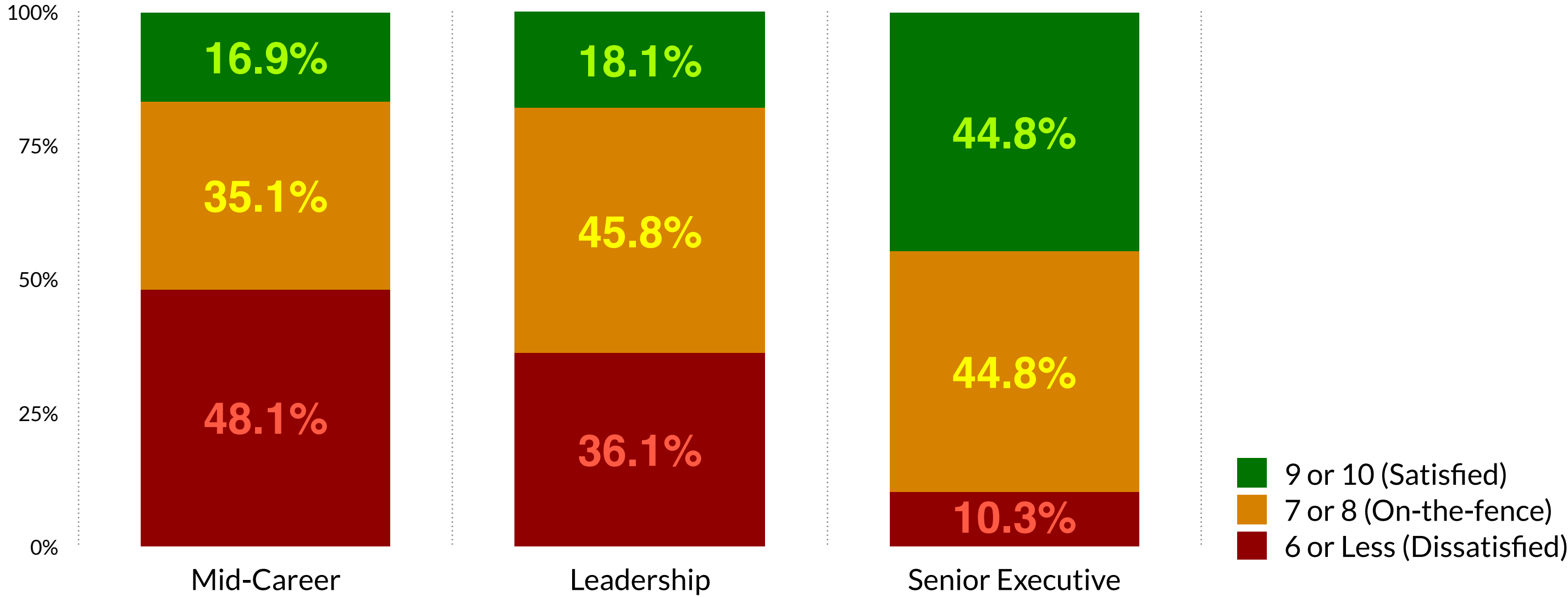


■ 9 or 10 (Satisfied)
■ 7 or 8 (On-the-fence)
■ 6 or Less (Dissatisfied)

- > When participants were asked to rate their current company culture, the results were shocking. Slightly less than one-fourth of employees rated their current company culture a 9 or 10.
- > Nearly one-third of employees were dissatisfied with their company culture. It is clearly evident that there is a culture crisis. This report provides insight into the major impact a poor company culture can have on your employees.

OF THE THREE CAREER LEVELS IN THE STUDY, MID-CAREER WERE MOST LIKELY TO BE DISSATISFIED WITH THEIR COMPANY CULTURE

Ratings of Current Company Culture on a 0-10 Scale



- > One’s career level has a major impact on their likelihood to be satisfied or dissatisfied with their company culture. It’s evident from the data that mid-career employees are struggling the most, as nearly half of these employees are dissatisfied with their company culture.
- > Senior Executives are significantly more likely than their mid-career and leadership peers to be satisfied with their company culture.

Defining Career Levels

Mid-Career: Manager, Sr. Manager, Project Lead/Manager)

Leadership: Director, Sr. Director, Partner, VP

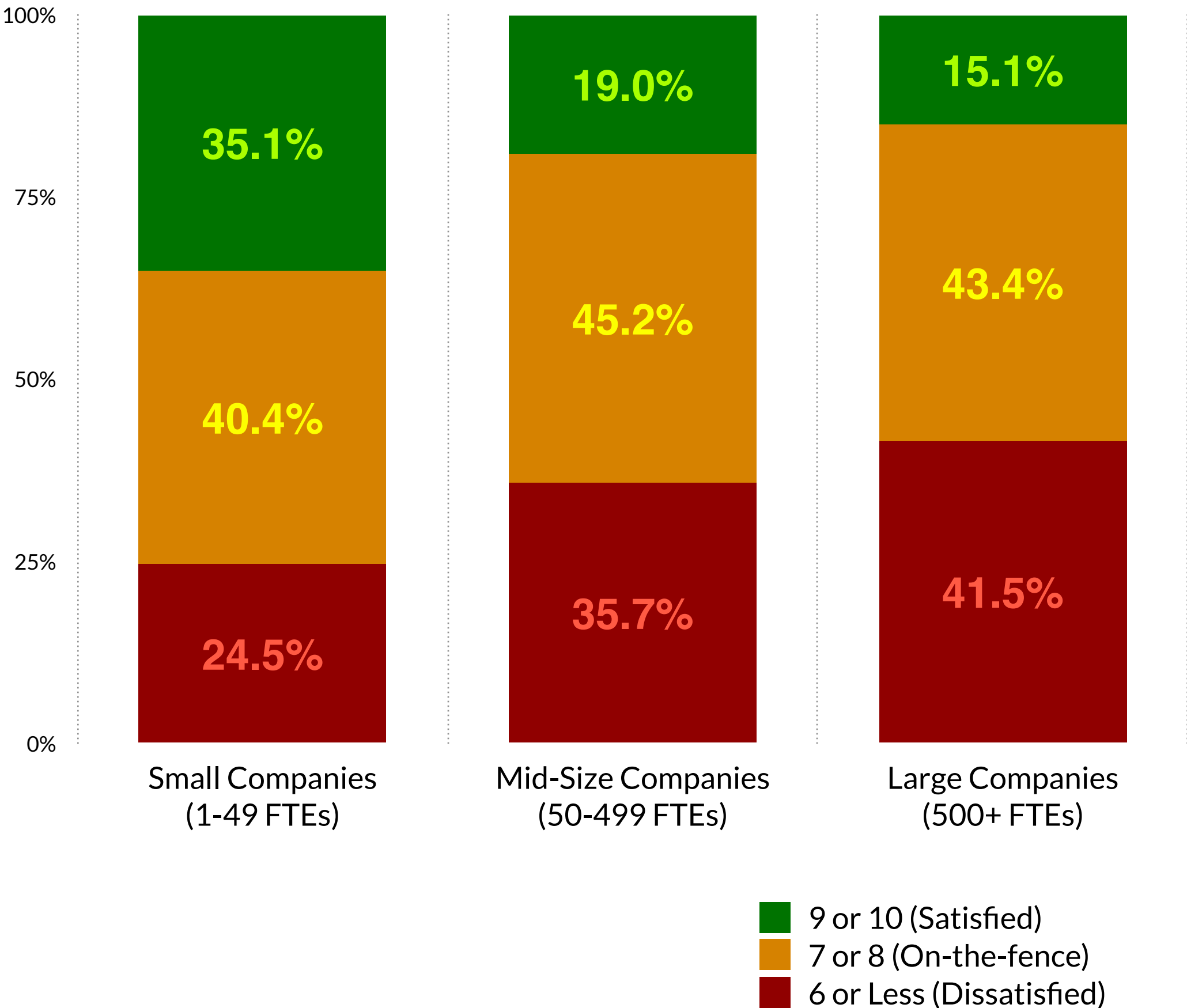
Senior Executive: C-level, President, Managing Partner, Founder, Principal

PUT THE DATA TO WORK

Your organization's culture is defined not by senior management but by your employees—especially those in the middle of their career. They are the ones who contribute to and experience a supportive, purposeful, respectful, and fulfilling environment. Nearly half of mid-career professionals are not satisfied with their company culture. Can you do more to make sure their voices and ideas are heard?

EMPLOYEES AT LARGER COMPANIES TEND TO BE LESS SATISFIED WITH THEIR COMPANY'S CULTURE

Ratings of Current Company Culture on a 0-10 scale by Company Size



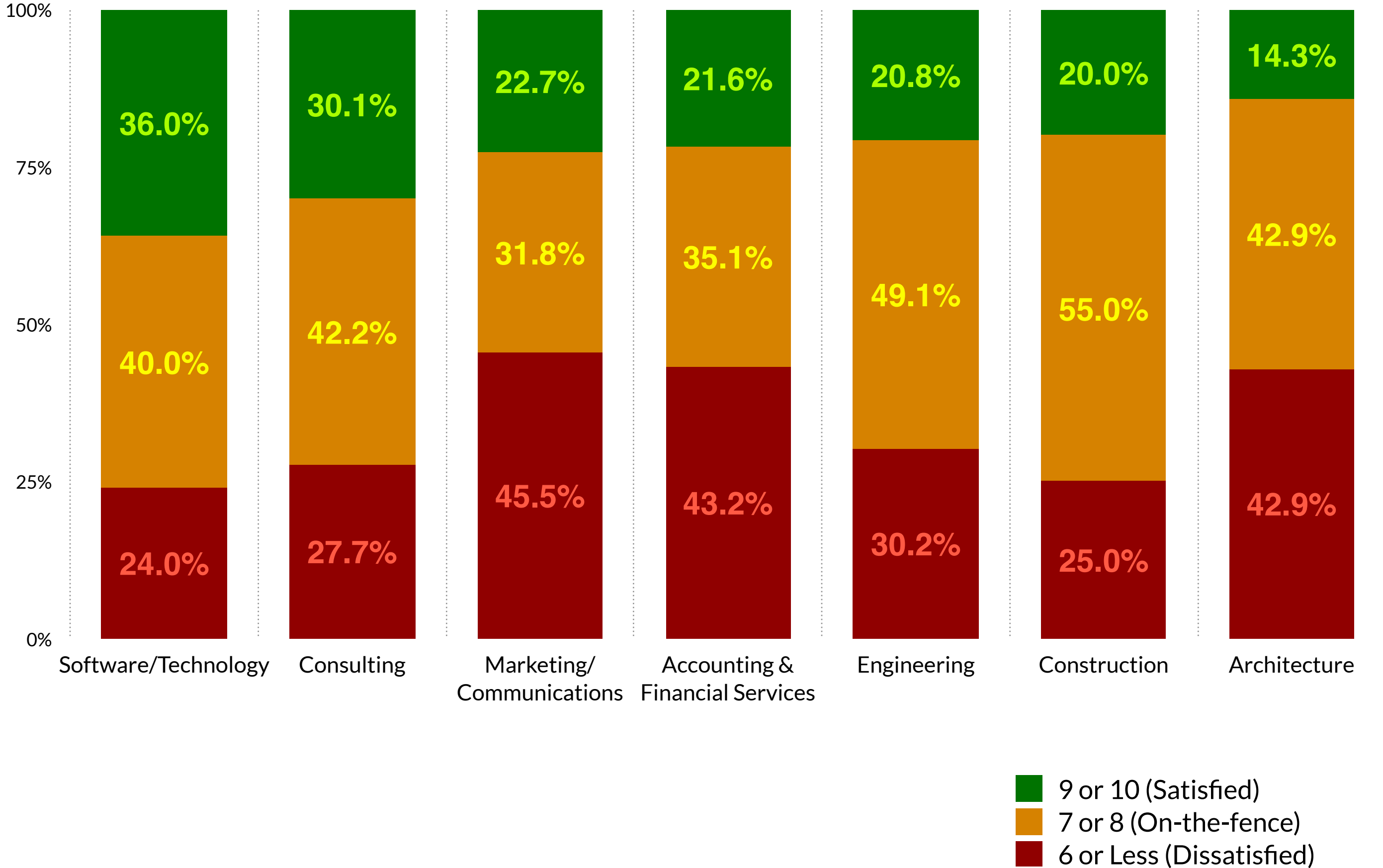
- > In addition to career level, the size of a company can have an impact on company culture.
- > Larger companies tend to struggle more with their company culture, while small companies fair much better. This report highlights some of the different cultural elements and preferences based on company size.

PUT THE DATA TO WORK

Company culture satisfaction is an area where size does matter. Employees at smaller companies are more than twice as satisfied than employees at larger companies (35.1% vs. 15.1%) While large companies can offer more benefits, perhaps they can take a page from the small company handbook and offer more personal attention, support, communications, and recognition between senior management and staff.

SATISFACTION OF COMPANY CULTURE DIFFERS BY INDUSTRY

Ratings of Current Company Culture on a 0-10 scale by Industry



> Some industries fair better than others when it comes to company culture satisfaction. Software/technology and consulting firms have the highest company culture ratings, while architecture, construction, and engineering struggle the most out of all professional service industries.

PUT THE DATA TO WORK

The software/technology industry has been on the cutting edge for a while when it comes to offering benefits such as paid time off, mental health days, flexible work schedules, and more. Take a few minutes and visit the websites or job descriptions for software/technology companies. What are they offering that you could be offering to strengthen your company culture and gain a competitive edge?

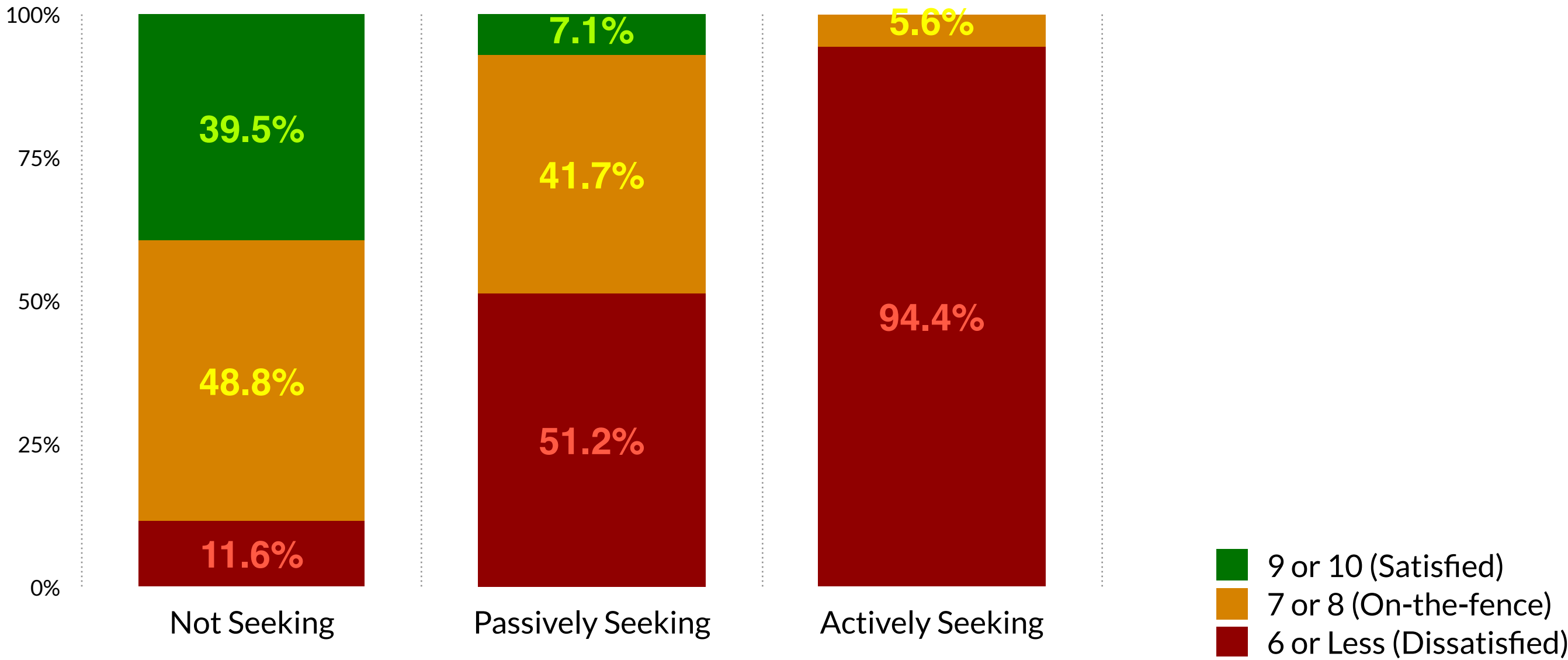


THE IMPACT OF COMPANY CULTURE ON EMPLOYEE RETENTION



COMPANY CULTURE HAS A MAJOR IMPACT ON JOB SEEKING STATUS

Ratings of Current Company (0-10) Culture by Job Seeking Status



- > How satisfied employees are with their current company culture is a very strong indicator of whether or not they will be seeking another job.
- > Nearly all employees (94.4%) who are dissatisfied with their current company culture are actively seeking a different job. Furthermore, there were no employees who were satisfied with their company culture and were also actively seeking a job.

Defining Job Seeking Status

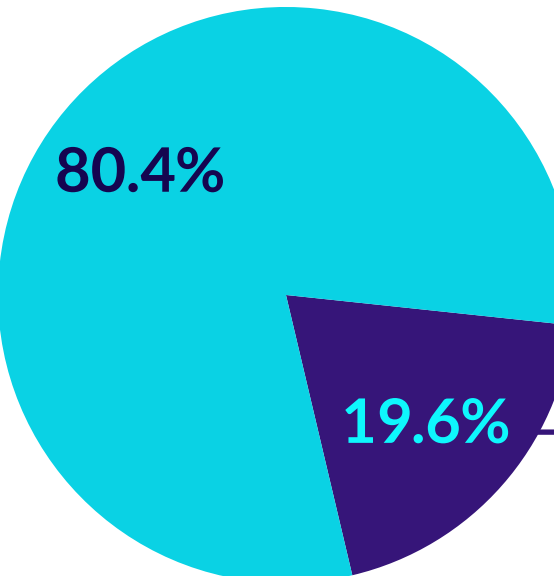
Not Seeking:
I'm currently employed and not considering job opportunities at other employers

Passively Seeking:
I'm currently employed but would be interested in the right job opportunity if it presented itself

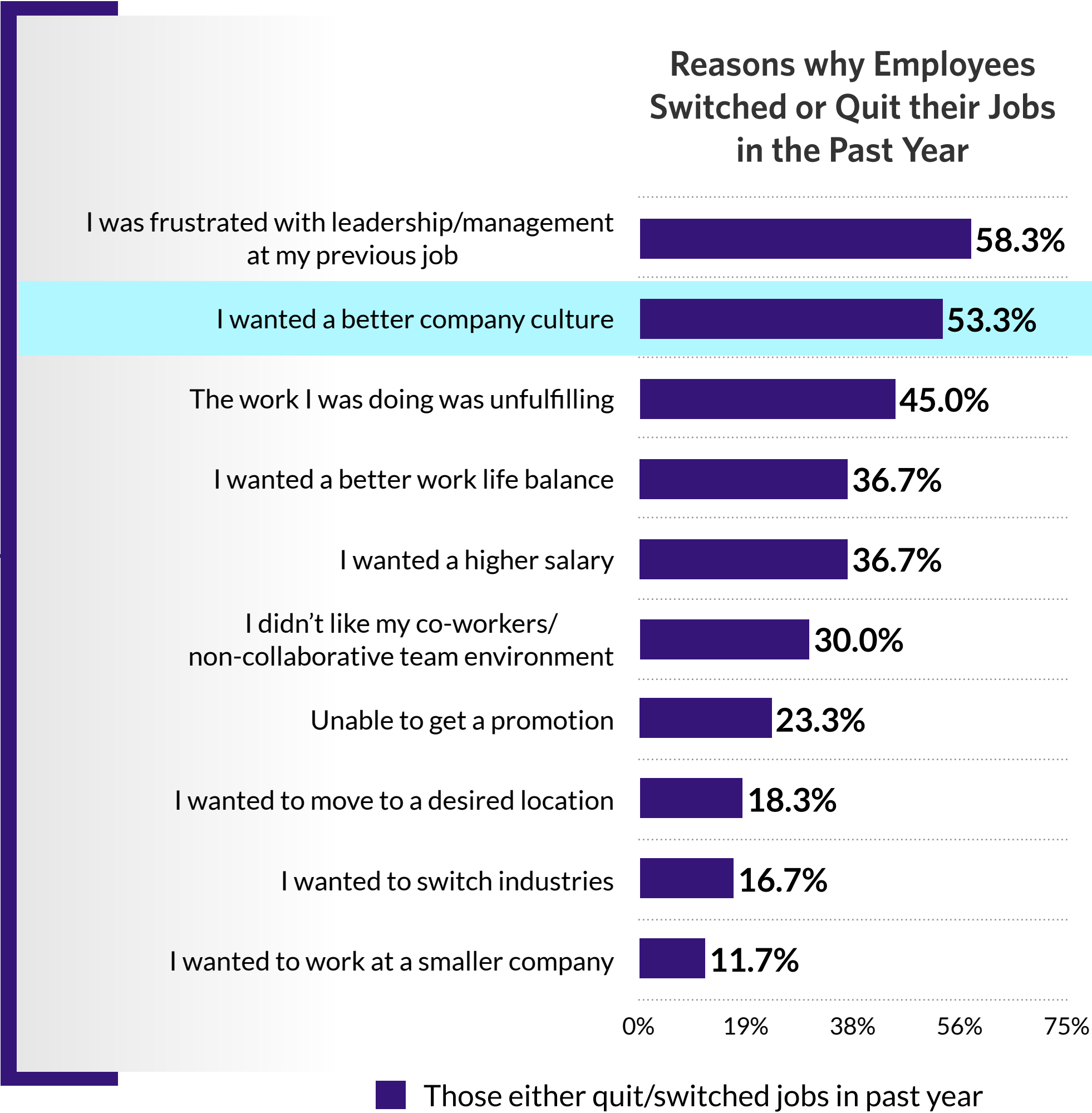
Actively Seeking:
I'm currently employed, but actively seeking a new job opportunity

OVER HALF OF THOSE WHO QUIT THEIR JOB IN THE PAST YEAR CITED POOR COMPANY CULTURE AS A REASON

Have You Switched/Quit Your Job in the Past Year?



● Did NOT Switch/Quit Job in Past Year
● Switched/Quit Job in Past Year



- > Roughly 1 in 5 employees either quit or switched their job in the past year. Why is this happening?
- > Nearly 60% of employees quit or switched their jobs due to poor leadership, and over half switched on the basis of wanting a better company culture. These two factors were much more prevalent than all others, including salary, work life balance and inability to get a promotion.

PUT THE DATA TO WORK

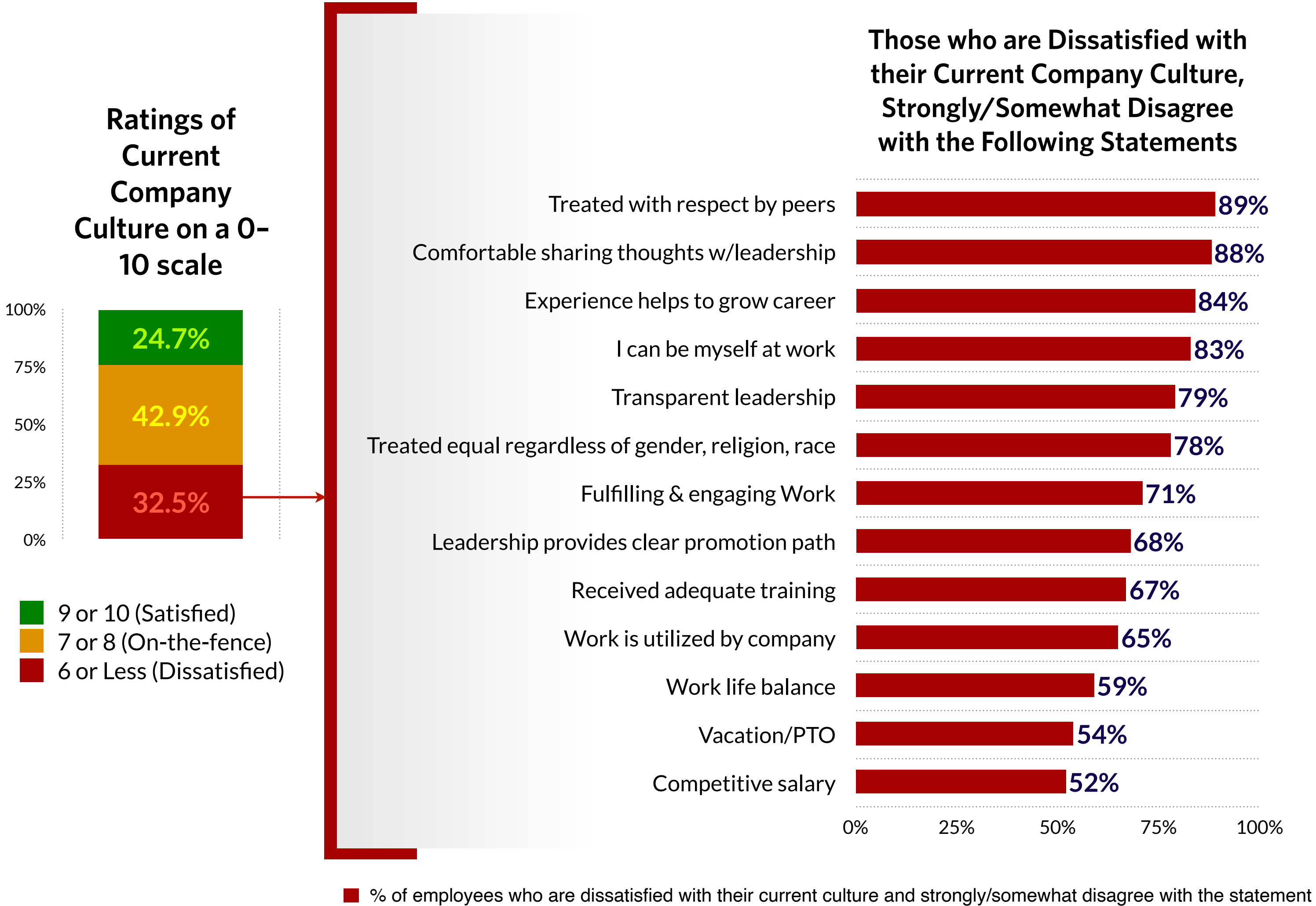
Here is the heart of the culture clash between senior management and employees—especially mid-career professionals. Employees are leaving because of frustration with senior management and dissatisfaction with company culture. Now is the time to step back and listen to all parties. What new processes, benefits, or support could you put into place?



WHAT AFFECTS COMPANY CULTURE SATISFACTION?



THESE FACTORS HAVE THE BIGGEST NEGATIVE IMPACT ON COMPANY CULTURE SATISFACTION

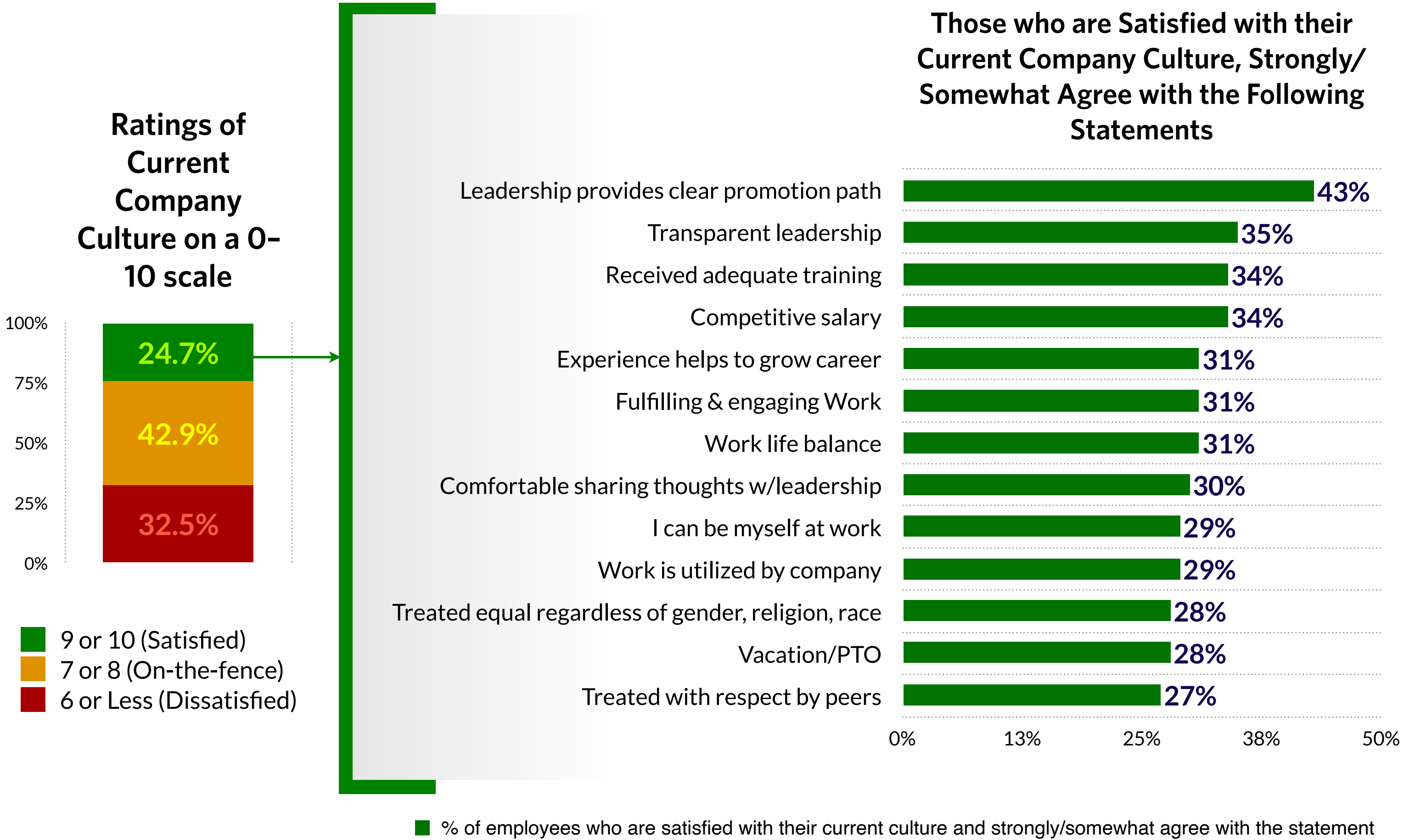


- > **How to Read This Chart:** Of those who rate their company culture a 0–6, 89% strongly/somewhat disagree that they are comfortable sharing thoughts with leadership.
- > From the data it's evident that being treated with respect by peers, comfort in sharing thoughts with leadership, and experience that helps grow your career have a major impact on company culture. Those who strongly/somewhat disagree with these sentiments are extremely likely to be unhappy with their company culture.
- > Factors such as competitive salary and amount of paid vacation have a much lower impact on company culture.

PUT THE DATA TO WORK

This data is very telling. Improving culture does not have to come at a high cost. It is not just about adding more benefits. Instituting programs that encourage treating peers with respect and help employees feel more comfortable speaking with leadership requires time, not money. To help get you started with other programs, organizations such as Hinge can offer culture assessment services.

THESE FACTORS HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON COMPANY CULTURE SATISFACTION



- > **How to Read This Chart:** Of those who rate their company culture a 9-10, 43% strongly/somewhat agree that leadership provides a clear promotion path.
- > Leadership plays a huge role when it comes to company culture. Those who are satisfied with their company culture most often agree that their company's leadership is transparent and provides a clear path for promotion.

PUT THE DATA TO WORK

Part of the reason for the culture clash between mid-level employees and senior management is that senior management doesn't recognize that employees want leaders who provide a clear promotion path and who communicate expectations clearly. Hopefully, the data provided by this study will help senior managers and Human Resources work together to remedy this disparity in attitude.

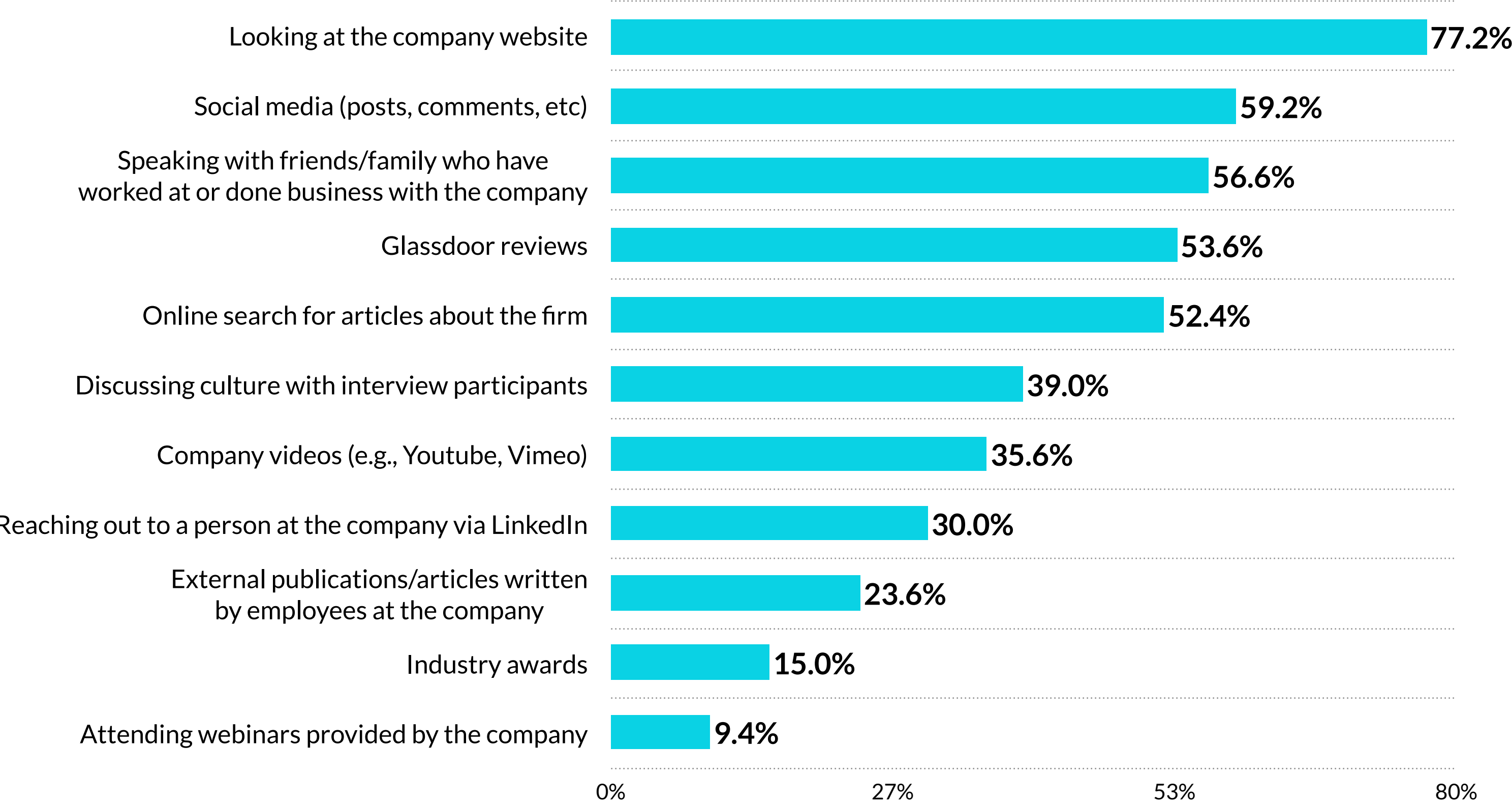


WHERE DO CANDIDATES LEARN ABOUT COMPANY CULTURE?



WHEN LOOKING FOR INFORMATION ABOUT AN EMPLOYER'S CULTURE, EMPLOYEES MOST OFTEN TURN TO THE COMPANY WEBSITE OR SOCIAL MEDIA

Where Employees Look For Information About a Prospective Employer's Organizational Culture or Reputation



- > Nearly 80% of mid-career employees will visit a company's website to learn about that company's culture.
- > Over half of employees will look at a company's social media posts, speak with a friend/family member, look at Glassdoor, and search for online articles when looking to learn more about an employer's culture.
- > Employees are least likely to consider industry awards or view webinars to gain perspective on a company's culture.

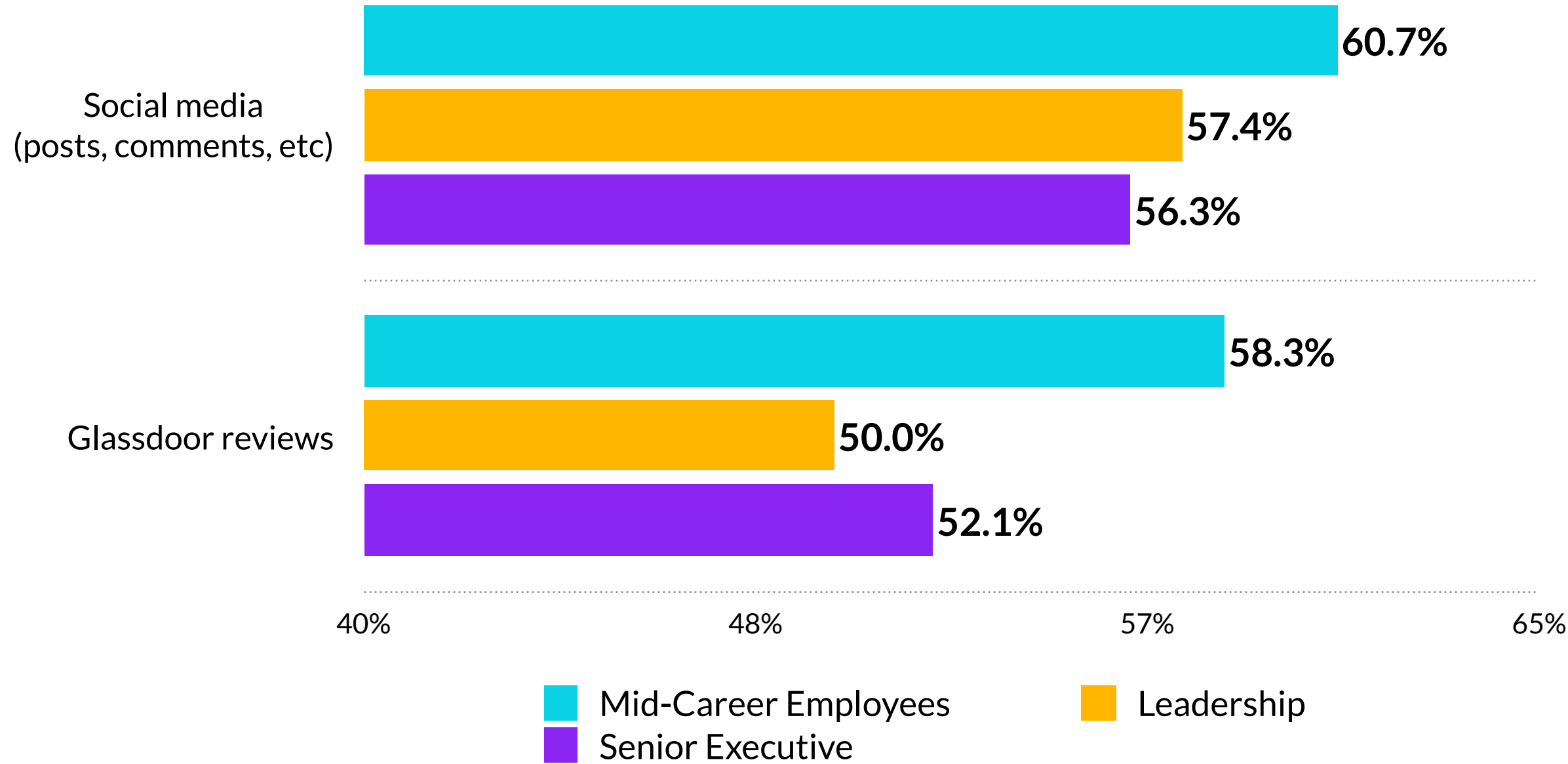
PUT THE DATA TO WORK

Talent retention is one of the challenges created by the culture clash--the other is talent acquisition. One resource above all others that reflects company culture and influences job candidates is the company website. Could your website be better at conveying respect, project ownership, support, and ability to advance? A lot of best practices can be applied to make your culture shine on a website. Drop Hinge a line and we'll walk you through some of them.

WHEN MID-CAREER EMPLOYEES ASSESS COMPANY CULTURE, POSTS IN SOCIAL MEDIA, GLASSDOOR WEIGH HEAVILY.

MID-CAREER FOCUS

Where Employees Look For Information About a Prospective Employer’s Organizational Culture or Reputation



> When mid-career employees are looking for a new employer, nearly two-thirds turn to social media—and over half are reading reviews on Glassdoor. As an employer, it is crucial to understand how your company is being talked about on social platforms. Poor reviews can have a major impact on how job seekers view your company.

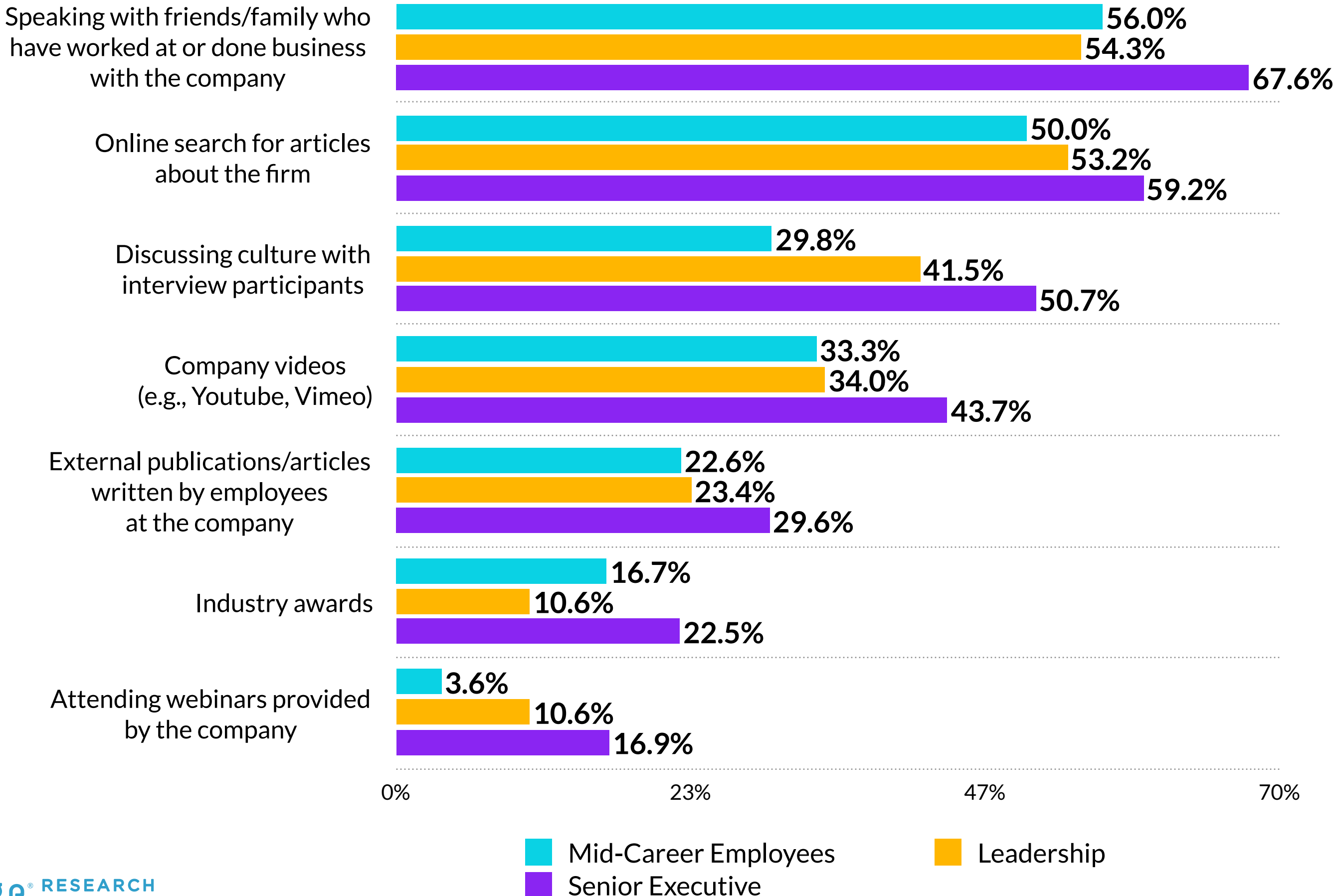
PUT THE DATA TO WORK

Be aware of what is being said about your organization. While you can't control it, you can address it. Our research shows that mid-career professionals and above look at social media posts and Glassdoor reviews when they are looking at a future employer. Be sure that you are too. Check in with Glassdoor every quarter to get a temperature reading. Your company may even want to invest in social media listening technology to identify and respond to comments.

SENIOR EXECUTIVES ARE MORE LIKELY TO TURN TO A VARIETY OF CHANNELS WHEN LOOKING FOR INFORMATION ABOUT COMPANY CULTURE

SENIOR EXECUTIVE FOCUS

Where Employees Look For Information About a Prospective Employer’s Organizational Culture or Reputation



> While it happens a lot less often than with mid-career employees, there are times when senior executives are looking to change jobs. When they are trying to learn about a prospective employer's company culture, senior executives will do their due diligence—accessing every resource more than mid-career or leadership employees.

PUT THE DATA TO WORK

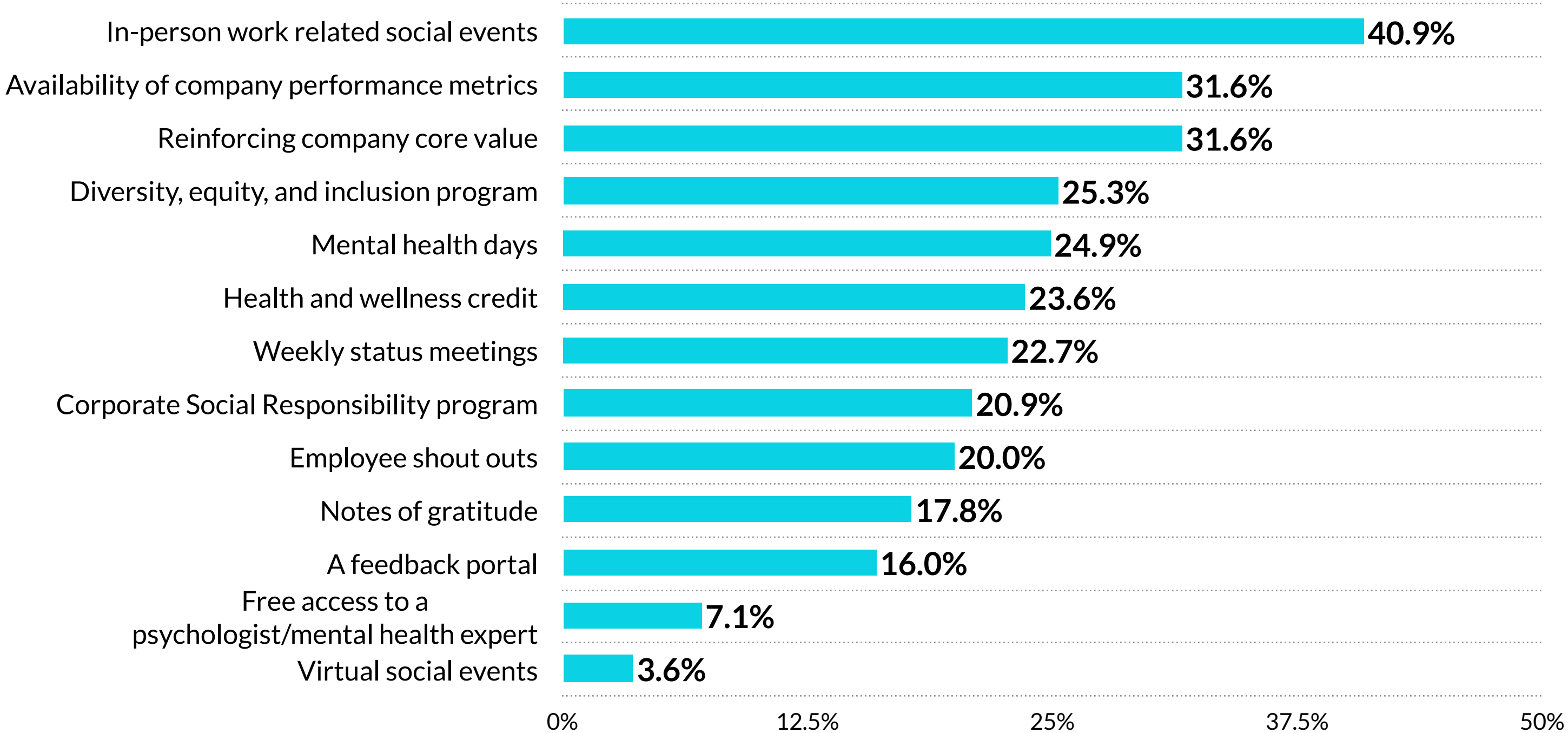
When recruiting senior management candidates, think beyond showcasing your corporate culture on your company website. In your SEO strategy, link to articles written by outsiders as well as company employees. Senior executives are the ones who will dig a little deeper and do Google keyword searches to find articles about your culture that are buried or older. You may also want to create a corporate culture recruiting video that candidates can find on sites such as YouTube or Vimeo. These subtle efforts could give you an advantage over other companies that candidates are considering.

METHODS TO IMPROVE COMPANY CULTURE



IN-PERSON HAPPY HOURS, REINFORCING COMPANY VALUES, AND AVAILABILITY OF COMPANY PERFORMANCE METRICS ARE THE TOP SERVICES THAT EMPLOYEES BELIEVE WILL IMPROVE COMPANY CULTURE

Services or Programs that Help to Improve Company Culture



- > As we near the end of the pandemic, employees are itching for in-person social events, which our study shows is the top choice for ways to improve company culture. Virtual social events are at the bottom of the list, with fewer than 4% of respondents seeing virtual events as a way to improve company culture.
- > Employees also see services such as DEI programs and mental health days as important for strengthening company culture.
- > In addition, employees want senior management to be more transparent. Having access to company performance metrics is high on the list of ways to improve company culture.

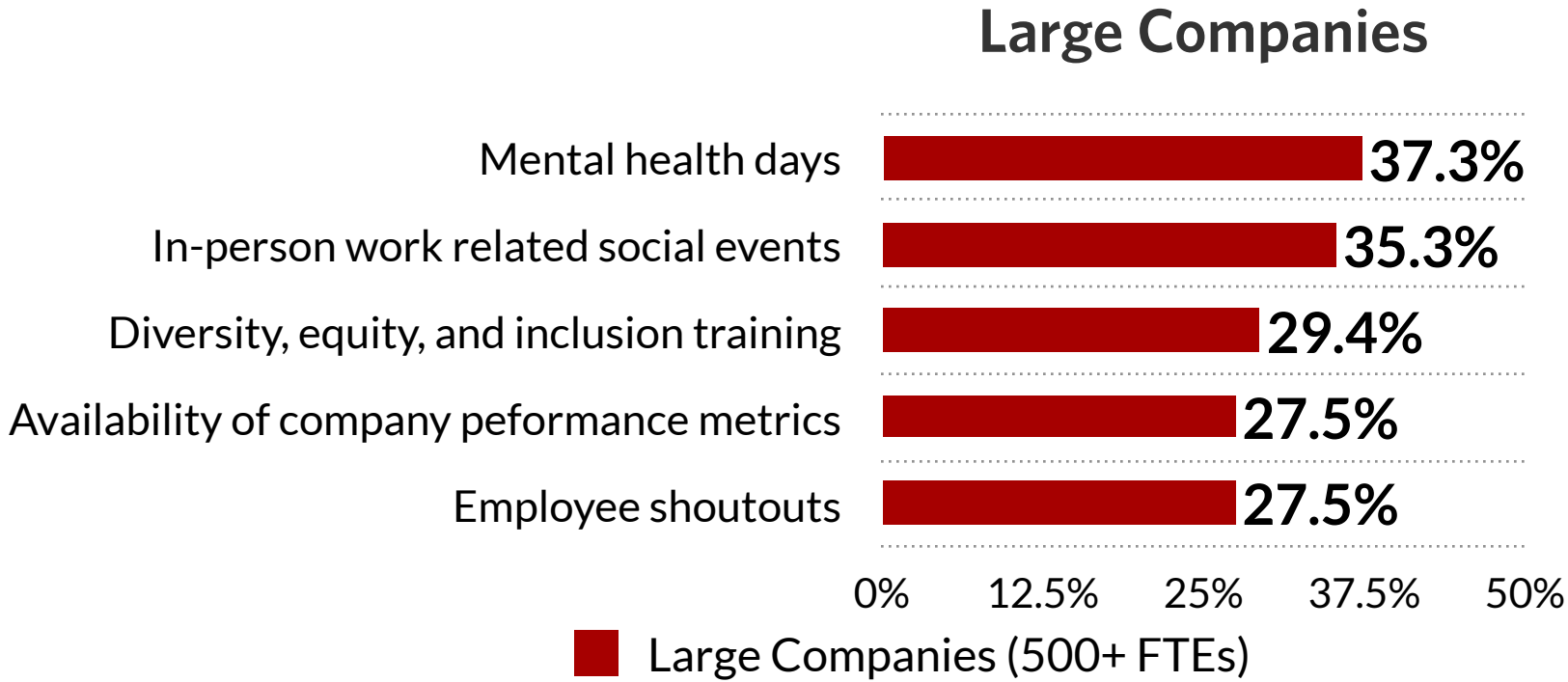
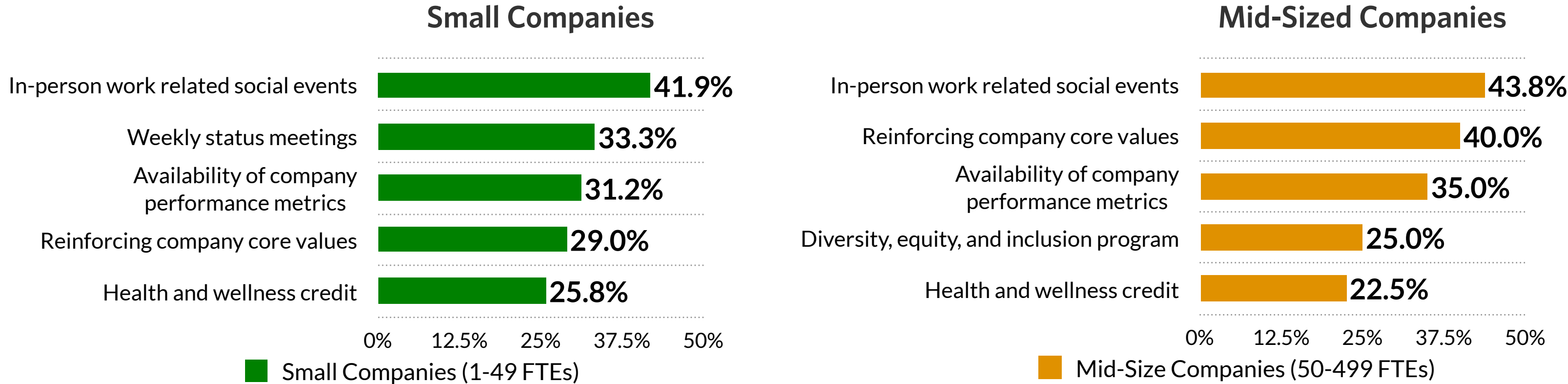
PUT THE DATA TO WORK

One of the quickest ways to improve company culture and the employee experience is to host not a virtual event, but an in-person happy hour or social event. Employees are missing the ability to meet in person. In-person company events provide a way for staff to share ideas with senior management. It is also a great place for senior management to be more transparent and share performance metrics, support, interest in extracurricular activities, and more.

> SEE FULL DESCRIPTIONS OF SERVICES & PROGRAMS IN THE APPENDIX

COMPANY SIZE CAN HAVE AN IMPACT ON WHICH CULTURE IMPROVEMENT SERVICES OR PROGRAMS ARE MOST VALUED

Top 5: Services or Programs that Help to Improve Company Culture



- > When it comes to programs/services that help to improve company culture, employees at large companies are more interested in mental health days and employee shoutouts.
- > Employees at small companies are major advocates of weekly status meetings.

PUT THE DATA TO WORK

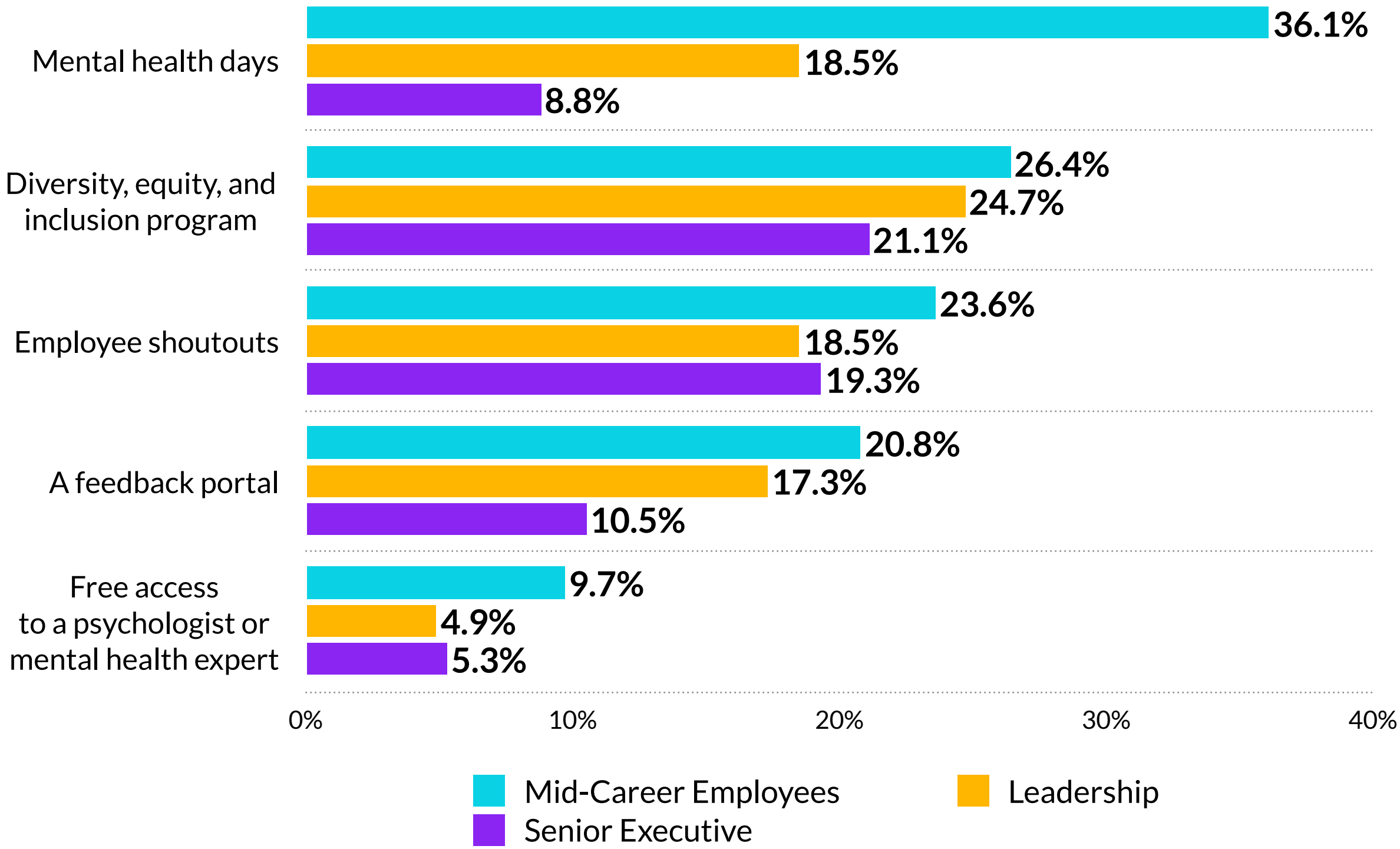
You can try any number of services and programs to improve your company culture, but note that company size matters. Our research shows that what employees want varies among small, mid-size and large companies. For example, mental health days and employee shout outs are important to employees at large companies but they don't even show up in the top five lists for small or mid-sized companies. Consider the size of your organization when trying to meet the culture needs of your employees.

> SEE FULL DESCRIPTIONS OF SERVICES & PROGRAMS IN THE APPENDIX

MID-CAREER EMPLOYEES ARE BY FAR THE BIGGEST ADVOCATES OF MENTAL HEALTH DAYS. THEY ALSO PREFER DEI PROGRAMS AND EMPLOYEE SHOUTOUTS

MID-CAREER FOCUS

Services or Programs that Help to Improve Company Culture



> Mid-career employees differ from leadership and senior executives when assessing which programs they feel help to improve company culture. Mid-career employees are far and away the biggest advocates of mental health days. They also have interest in DEI training, employee shoutouts, and a feedback portal.

PUT THE DATA TO WORK

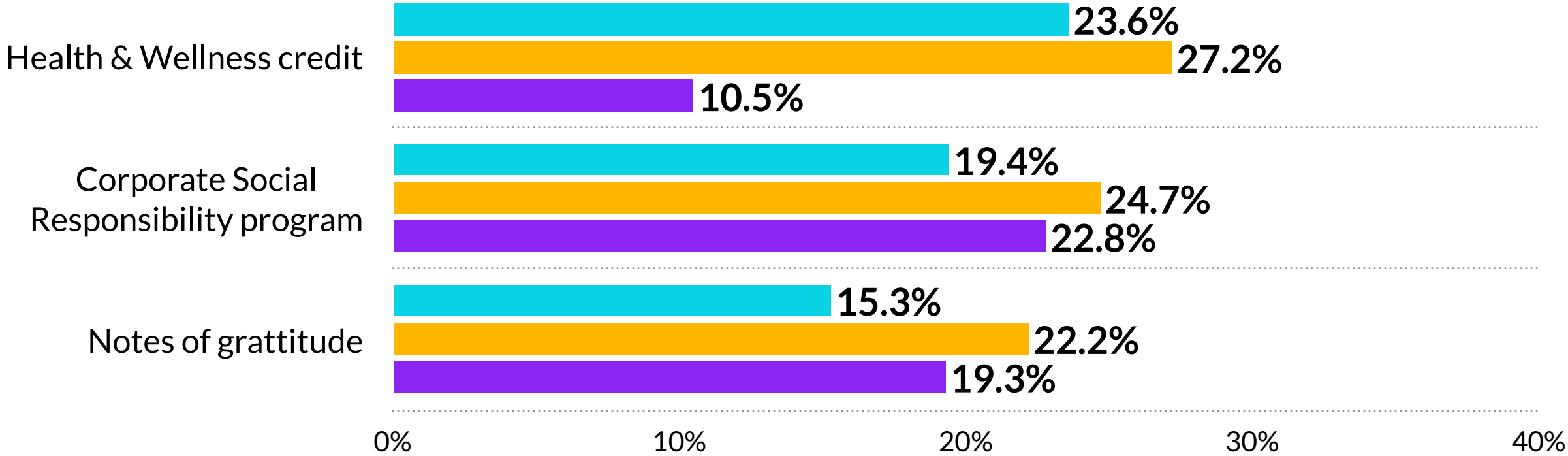
It's time to make changes and do things differently to ensure you keep as many of your mid-career employees as possible. If you have the budget, why not implement mental health days and a DEI program? You may be surprised at the positive impact such programs can have on your organization.

“Employees having the opportunity to express their concerns without the fear of being victimized or terminated. Inclusivity and equal opportunities”

LEADERSHIP EMPLOYEES FAVOR HEALTH & WELLNESS CREDITS, WHILE SENIOR EXECUTIVES ARE MAJOR ADVOCATES OF REINFORCING CORE CORPORATE VALUES

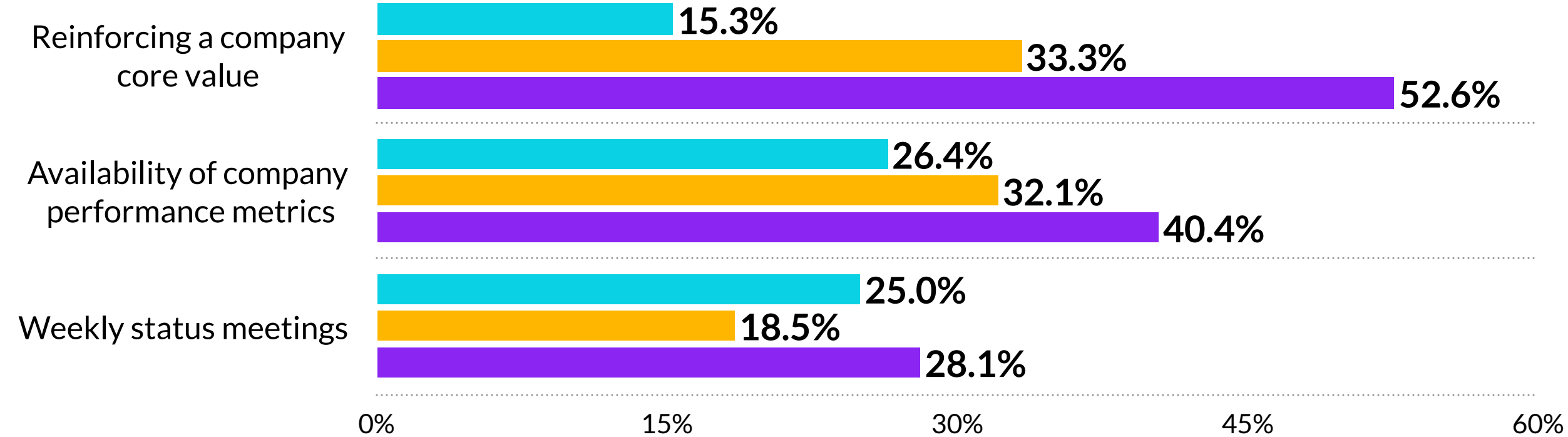
LEADERSHIP FOCUS

Services or Programs that Help to Improve Company Culture



SENIOR EXECUTIVE FOCUS

Services or Programs that Help to Improve Company Culture



Mid-Career Employees Leadership Senior Executive

- > Leadership employees differ in that they favor health and wellness, corporate social responsibility programs, and notes of gratitude.
- > Over half of senior executives are advocates of reinforcing a company core value, providing company performance metrics, and weekly status meetings.

PUT THE DATA TO WORK

Even if senior management and mid-career professionals agree that they would like to improve culture, they don't necessarily agree on how to do it. For example, 53% of senior management believe that reinforcing a company core value will improve company culture. Only 15% of mid-career staff agree with that choice. Until both parties can get on the same page, it will be hard to make changes that everyone will accept and more people will get frustrated and leave.



CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION: WHAT THESE RESULTS MEAN FOR YOU

“BEFORE YOU JUDGE ME OR DECIDE HOW YOU'LL DEAL WITH ME, WALK AWHILE IN MY SHOES. IF YOU DO, I THINK YOU'LL FIND WITH MORE UNDERSTANDING WE CAN MEET IN THE MIDDLE AND WALK THE REST OF THE WAY TOGETHER.” — ERIC HARVEY

Culture clashes are happening at alarming rates in corporations, firms, and associations—driving employees away and making it harder to hire new employees. Here are three takeaways from this research that you can apply today.

1. The culture clashes are real. You can no longer ignore them or claim that you did not know about them.

For these employee experience problems to be addressed and resolved, both parties (employees and senior management) must take the time to understand the other party's perspective. Senior managers must step back and realize that they might not be the best communicators or the most supportive. They need to realize that what drives and motivates them may be different than what drives and motivates mid-career and junior employees. Employees must communicate better as well. They need to let senior management know what they are frustrated with—before they decide to leave. Sometimes senior managers have constraints they are working with that employees do not know about. Use the findings from this report to start conversations, implement new processes, and improve your company culture.

2. You can change your company culture without spending a lot of money.

Many organizations don't address improving their employee experience and corporate culture because they feel that the cost of new benefits and programs will be overwhelming. But as this research shows many of the culture changes employees are looking for do not require hard dollars—just time and effort.

Some of those culture adjustments include better communication and more transparency from senior management, a clearer career path, getting respect from peers, employee recognition/shoutouts, in-person happy hours, and more. By implementing these or similar changes, you are showing your employees and peers that you are listening to and valuing them. This is a great way to begin minimizing any culture clash.

3. When you are ready to invest in new benefits and programs, be sure to consider company size and employee segment voices.

As you could see in this study's findings, wanting more paid time off or a better salary did not rank high as ways to improve culture satisfaction or the the employee experience. Depending on the size of the company and the specific employee segment response, programs such as health and wellness credits; reinforcement of company core values; and diversity, equity, and inclusion training ranked high as ways to improve corporate culture.

If embracing company culture changes is new to your organization, perhaps it is best that you bring in a seasoned consulting firm such as Hinge to help assess your culture, research issues and perceptions, or restructure your website to better showcase your company culture and employee experience. Hopefully, this research will provide the data points and validation for all areas of your organization to come together and build a more productive and supportive environment where fewer employees will want to leave and more candidates will want to work.



ABOUT HINGE

ABOUT HINGE

Hinge is the leading research-based branding and marketing firm for professional services.

Our ongoing research into over 30,000 professional services firms and buyers of their services is changing the way firms go to market.

Hinge is made up of three divisions:

Hinge Marketing, our consulting arm, helps businesses build gorgeous visual brands, deliver powerful marketing programs, and achieve exceptional growth.

Hinge Research Institute, our research arm, studies the professional services industry and equips organizations that want to reach and engage this audience with compelling research-based content.

Hinge University, our online learning platform, teaches high-growth, high-visibility strategies and techniques to marketers, business developers, and professionals across the globe.

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ABOUT THE HINGE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

The Hinge Research Institute, a division of Hinge, has a two-part mission:

1. To study high-growth professional services firms and their clients.

We collect data and analyze marketplace trends to discover why some firms grow much faster than average and reap greater profits. We share this knowledge so that every professional services firm can prosper.

2. To help organizations engage their professional services audience.

We do this in a variety of ways, such as:

Creating custom research:

Commission a piece of research once and repurpose it many times in blogs, webinars, articles, social media posts, and more.

Licensing existing research:

License our existing research in the form of studies, books, and guides—at a fraction of the price of custom research.

Co-brand a webinar: Co-present a webinar with one of our research analysts and reach Hinge's database of over 60,000 professionals. Get engagement like never before.

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For more information about the Hinge Research Institute, please contact:

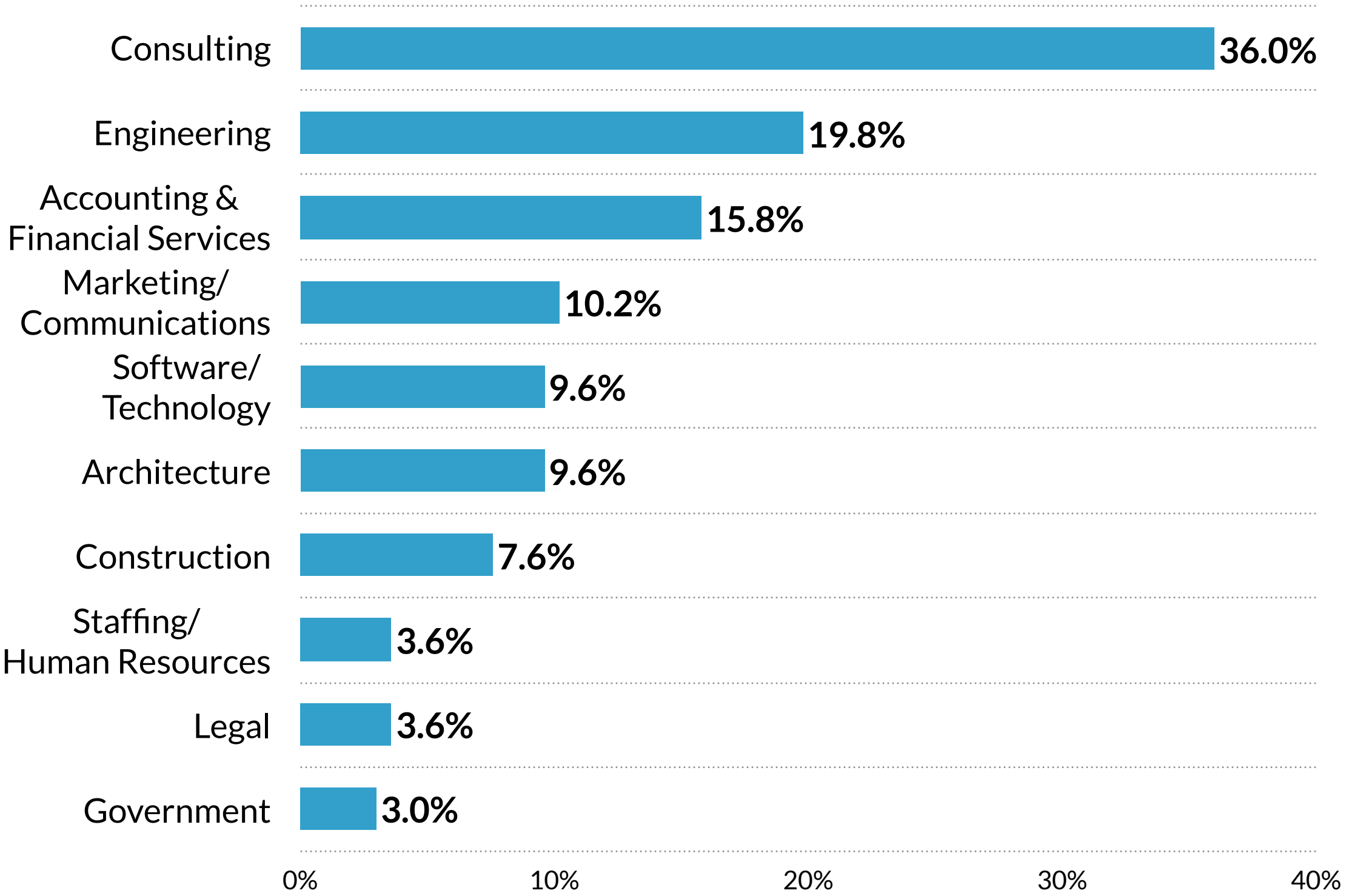
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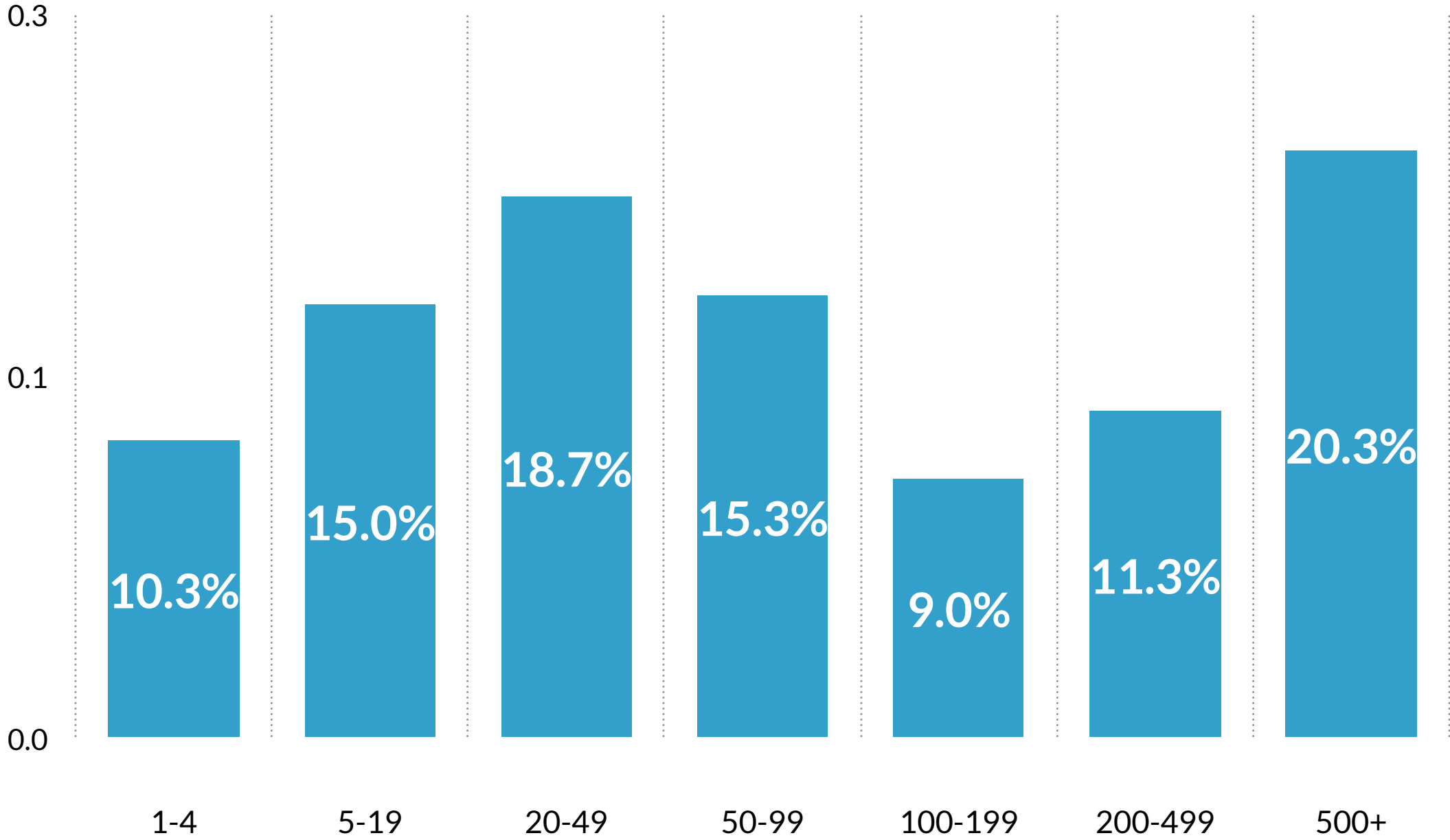
APPENDIX

APPENDIX: STUDY PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Industries of Study Participants



Size of Participant's Company (Number of Full Time Employees)



RESPONDENTS WERE ALLOWED TO CHOOSE MULTIPLE INDUSTRIES

APPENDIX: ANSWER CHOICES

Employee Benefits/Services	Benefit/Service Full Description
Employee shout outs	During a group meeting, employees recognize and praise each other for work accomplishments
Weekly status meetings	Company meets on a weekly basis to review company performance and discuss priorities
Availability to company performance metrics	Revenue, profitability, sales pipeline etc. are shared with all employees
In-person work related social events	Happy hours, team building activities, other in-person social activities
Free access to a psychologist or mental health expert	Employer provides free access to a mental health expert
A feedback portal	Portal that allows employees to provide anonymous feedback to leadership
Notes of gratitude	Employees provide anonymous notes of gratitude/praise to other employees
Mental health days	Company allows for a day off for all employees
Virtual social events	Virtual happy hours, online team building activities,
Health and wellness credit etc)	Company offers a dollar amount towards health and wellness related products services (e.g. gym membership, workout equipment, sleep aids, etc)
Reinforcing a company core value	Reiterating importance of a company core value, providing examples and recognizing those who adhere to it
Corporate Social Responsibility program	Initiatives that allow employees to give back to the larger community, through donations to worthy causes and volunteer/pro bono work, among others.
Diversity, equity, and inclusion program	Initiatives to actively attract, retain and groom for positions of leadership employees of any race, gender or disability.



THANK YOU